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THE COLUMN OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Change in the West

A dramatic shift in world forces has taken place during the past twelve months. Last year, this time, it was possible for the strategists in the Kremlin—political as well as military—to contemplate the conquest of Europe with hardly lifting a finger on their part, save for pressure and direction. The internal condition of the European states was such that at a certain time—so it appeared—the Communist parties in each state could assume power with the indirect support and threat of Russia. It was possible for the Russian leaders to contemplate sitting nice and snug in their own country, developing their own internal economy and policy, whilst the rest of Europe went through the throes of revolution. The Kremlin had everything to gain and nothing to lose. Self-contained in their own vast country the Russian leaders could watch chaos in other states, profit by it, and eventually through their nominees assume control.

All that has been changed. Whatever the prospects of the future, Russia could not now contemplate the conquest of Europe without dire risk to her own stability and safety. The Russian ruling class would have to undertake an adventure unprofitable to themselves and fraught with the danger of their own internal overthrow. In other words Russian imperialism has been baulked. In the Europe of the future, as the Continent under American support is now shaping itself, the U.S.S.R. has little to gain and very much to lose in imperialist adventure. There is now then, at least, a breathing space, and perhaps a long one, in which Western civilisation can consolidate its powers.

There is Time

This is a glorious opportunity for political democracy. Gone, or fast fading, is the time of frustration and uncertainty. There is opportunity ahead for every creative force that Western man can call into being. There is time, for instance, for the European community, or the Western half of it, to become a consolidated political and cultural force. It can be novel and new in its outlook. Being composed of separate states, each with a separate tradition it is unlikely to fall to the tyranny of imperial political adventure. It can be, of its very structure, a part of the basis of world peace. In co-operation with the great democracy across the Atlantic, and with all the nations through the world that comprise the British Commonwealth, it can begin for the first time to construct the world state based on the values of economic security for all, and absolute power for none. This is the hope within the grasp of Western man. It is not simply a political or social hope, it is one that belongs to the life of the spirit in all its grasp of what life is and how it can be directed.

Breathing Space

The Russians are at the United Nations, in constant parley and verbal conflict with the representatives of the nations of the world. It is well to note that a world parliament is in being. Nothing quite like this has been known before. Like most parliaments it does not give many outward signs of an inward and spiritual unity, but it can be believed that such a unity is growing. Russia, it is clear, dare not stay away from the world parliament; she had to return at the outbreak of the Korean war. Forces are at work, centrifugal forces, pulling the nations of the world together. There are forces dragging them apart as well, grave and bitter forces, but it would be unwise to ignore all the power of centrifugal tendencies. The demand that a few leading statesmen of the great powers should meet to settle differences is superfluous against this certain fact that there is already a place for the immediate exchange of opinion—and the certain fact that inevitably such an exchange on a certain level is already taking place. The fight for peace is as real a fight as the struggle for imperial interests. The public opinion for peace everywhere is terribly real and overwhelming. No powerful dictator dare ignore this opinion however cynically he may try to side-track it. "There are," said Napoleon, "only two powers in this world, the sword and the spirit . . . in the long run the sword is always beaten by the spirit." And he ought to have known. The spirit is as strong today as in any other day.

The Price of Peace

It is true that peace—on the international scale—has become more probable in the immediate future on account of events in Korea. Aggression—it is marked over Korea—does not pay, and no doubt the practitioners of power-politics will draw the lesson. But at what a price? Hundreds of thousands of simple people have lost their lives or been uprooted from their homes. Towns and villages have been destroyed. A land that was comparatively peaceful a few months ago has endured the iron harrow of war. Peace may be nearer, but a trail of blood and sorrow lies in its track. It is the quarrel that judges that situation and not the supposedly final result. If the quarrel could not be avoided then at least something is wrong with the leadership that made it inevitable.

It is a general world condition that is under condemnation and not any particular part of it. It is the values by which men live, and which they expect and applaud in their rulers which are evil, and not the blacks and whites of current myths with their easy division into "yeses" and "noes". A whole convention of living lies under condemnation: the convention which assumes that the current myths of any society is the only one by which men can live. It may be that acceptance is the only failure, and rejection by the whole weight of the spirit the only triumph.

In every society there is a column far more important than the "fifth". It is the column of the Holy Spirit. It is composed of those who have withdrawn from the decayed husks of conventional forms and are engaged in creating, in independence, the moulds of the future. The column of the Holy Spirit is world wide; it is stronger than any tyranny of the tyrant or the conventional form of the conventionalist.

It is working now wherever men think for themselves or do not swallow easily the tag-words of the popular idea. The column is stronger than people dream of.

MR. HOYLE AND THE CHRISTIANS

A FURTHER REFLECTION

By Wallace Tavener

LAST WEEK I discussed the attitude of the B.B.C. to Mr. Hoyle. This week I would like to discuss the attitude of some of Mr. Hoyle's listeners.

(1) In his last lecture Mr. Hoyle referred to correspondents of a certain kind who wrote to him "in their hundreds", to tell him he was wrong. These emphatically knew he was wrong because they had special access to truth, by way of revelation. On this they were all in agreement—that they were in possession of revealed truth. But on *what* was revealed to them there was no agreement. The content of their special knowledge was various and contradictory. And this relieved Mr. Hoyle of any attempt to answer them.

This terse report of the lecturer brings to light again something that the pious are slow to perceive. Revelation is claimed to be a short-cut to knowledge. It is represented as cutting out all doubtful argumentation; as being simple, direct and conclusive. And indeed when one is closeted with an individual who boasts a revealed ground for his assertions he can give an impression of a sweeping finality. But if one were to bring together all the depositions of revelation made by various individuals, churches and religions one would be struck by their fantastic incoherence. In order to select some one or two as reliable one would have to deny the validity of the majority. But on what principle could one deny validity to the majority and not deny it to all?

The fact is that revelations are not a simplification of the means of religious knowledge, but just another source of confusion. And it is left to our judgment to assess, on rational and ethical grounds, the acceptability of a revelation. Such revelations cannot, then, be regarded as the highest authority in religious knowledge. The highest authority remains in our moral and rational judgment.

We do not mean by what has been said that there is nothing in the *general* idea of revelation. On the contrary, no positive activity or constructive thought can get along without something of the kind. What we have spoken of are those revelations called *special* revelations by which sectarian dogmas are set forth and authenticated, as it is claimed, by particular miracles. It is these that produce the confusion of anecdotal wonders, many of them without any value in themselves. On the other hand all the world's solid wisdom has rested in great part on intuitive recognitions and realisations. This is true not only of religious and poetical ideas but also of philosophy, science and statesmanship.

We distinguish the intuitive impulses of wisdom from the special revelations by observing that the special revelations base themselves on some miraculous contradiction of the ascertained facts of nature; while the intuitive wisdom includes them all, contradicts none, and, with their aid, leaps forward to further meanings and facts beyond them. This is the authentic process of revelation. It is the medium of all progressive religion while, by contrast, special revelations with their claims and their nonsense have become an obstacle to religion. Their authority has become nil, and such a valuable worker in ideas as Mr. Hoyle can barely suppress a tone of contempt as he pushes them aside.

(2) One objection, of an astonishing nature, was too clumsily expressed to be properly scrutinised. It was produced by a Roman Catholic and an Anglican. They accused Mr. Hoyle of citing unique Christian ideas as though modern Christians still believed them. We Unitarians have been lectured a great deal on this subject, and we have been told that if we move away from the unique Christian ideas we may surrender the name Christian. We should very much like to know how a Catholic and an Anglican can make the distinction between ancient Christian ideas and modern, rejecting the former.

We have been told that the orthodox conserve Christianity by the strict adherence to New Testament ideology, and the maintenance of the Creeds. When this is said we can understand it, and even respect it as a downright statement. We are prepared to understand that either you are Orthodox, affirm the Creeds and Articles of Faith, and accept an out-of-date science; or you are a Unitarian and accept the progress of knowledge and allow changes in the world-view to inform your religion. But these gentlemen want it both ways. They like to take credit for being orthodox, and from that point of view consider themselves free to repudiate us as Christians; yet when they come to a stiff challenge they fall back, in their self-defence, on Unitarian principles! Needless to say without acknowledgment!

(3) It was a legerdemain of this sort that tripped up Mr. Hoyle on one point. He had quoted Job 19:26 and was told that his was a misquotation, and he withdrew it.

This is the passage where Job, agonising under the impact of injustice, declaims about his personal fate. It is one of the most strenuous moments in the whole of the Bible, and something of its tumult seems to be communicated in the contortions of the script. The impression I take from the many English versions of this text is that nobody is certain what it means.

But really Mr. Hoyle was on unassailable ground, for he quoted from the Authorised Version, the Bible officially sanctioned, honoured in all established churches, and issued to the world. The fact that this passage was a mistranslation (if it was) has nothing to do with Mr. Hoyle. If the Bible is a bad translation it is the responsibility of the church authorities who will not withdraw it or replace it by a better.

The text contains, of course, the first obscure hint of the idea of personal survival. The question in this debate was whether the churches still believed in the Resurrection of the Body. Churchmen here tried to tell Mr. Hoyle that they did not!

Why do they contradict Mr. Hoyle when he assumes that the orthodox believe in the Resurrection of the Body, and remain silent when it is asserted by their colleagues on the wireless that they must?

There is nothing here to concern Mr. Hoyle. But there is a great deal to be cleared up by orthodox teachers in their own interest.

IT OCCURRED TO ME

By Muriel Hilton

ON MY way down to church the other Sunday evening I called to see our artist friend. She was in her usual soaring good spirits and asked if I had time to see the portfolio of water colours. This art club to which she belongs has a membership of fifteen and each month the members are expected to submit two or more pictures. These are circulated together with criticisms and there is a book in which little notes are put. Through the years a very charming and enduring relationship has developed between these artists, and when it is possible they call and meet each other. This is rare, as the members live in different parts of England, but on those occasions when it has been possible it has been of mutual enrichment.

We had a very happy half hour looking at the numerous pictures and some were undoubtedly of very high standard. Two members had managed to meet during the summer and had painted the same subject, which as my friend said shows how individual art is, for the eye had seen quite different pictures. She showed me two from a member who is well past his three score years and ten. "Don't you think they are wonderful?" she said. "He is one of our most enthusiastic members." It all seemed very remarkable to me, for two pictures a month take some doing, especially in this distracting world. She handed me the book in which the artists criticised each other's work and it was typical of my friend that hers were all encouraging and enthusiastic. "It is very important to encourage the beginners," she said. "In fact all those who do creative work should be encouraged first and foremost. The helpful criticism should come second." As I went down to church I thought of that little band of artists sending round their work to each other and of others who through much labour and joy create works of beauty and find a deep source of satisfaction. As William Blake once said, "Painting, poetry and music are the three powers in man of conversing with Paradise, not swept away by the flood of time and space."

"THE INQUIRER"

Next week, we are happy to state, "The Inquirer" will be published in its usual format and size.

THE SAINTS

By Charles Easton

One hopeful feature of our much criticised modern society is the fact that it retains the ability to recognise a saint. The man or woman who remarks "He's a saint if ever there was one", is not only paying homage to a flowering of the human spirit. He or she is assuring us that human nature has not lost its power of spiritual perception.

The world needs more saints. Its ordinary affairs are not yet done well enough. Its everyday feelings are not yet pure enough. The world needs more saints who are ever ready to believe the best of human nature, and who are convinced that the potentialities of development in human souls are unfathomable. The world needs more of those who by personal outgiving of generous trust transform people by the challenge of their expectation. We need saints who in their sublime extravagance of human tenderness are "like the single drops which sparkle in the sun as they are flung far ahead of the advancing edge of a wave crest". If life is to advance some must be ready to assume the risk of a new step, to try the way of trust, to offer non-resistence, to invest love.

When the saint puts himself to the test with divine confidence, he is the impregnator of the world, the vivifier. He brings to birth goodness which but for him would lie for ever dormant. One fire kindles another. We are compelled to live above our little selves when we meet a saint. He wakens us to a purpose greater than our own. In the vestibule of Trinity Church, Atlanta, are the words: "Why are the saints saints? Because they were cheerful when it was difficult to be cheerful and patient when it was difficult to be patient; and because they pushed on and on when they wanted to stand still and kept silent when they wanted to talk, and were agreeable when they wanted to be disagreeable".

The challenge of the saint is a challenge that we cannot ignore. He shows us life as it appears in the radiance of God. He "makes it easier for us to believe in God". His is the secret of the more abundant life. It is to live consecrated to the life of the Spirit. It is to see God as our origin, God as our environment, God as our end. It is to do all things to his greater glory.

AN ANCIENT FOUNDATION

By Eric Glasgow

Few of the buildings in Nottingham convey a better impression of historical continuity than the Unitarian Chapel in High Pavement. Although this dates only from 1876, it replaces an earlier one going back to 1691, and the profusion of very fascinating portraits and maps in the adjoining Hall keeps alive its formidable ancestry. It is also among the dwindling number of old Unitarian Chapels still to maintain a library for the congregation, and the books thus made available compel a regret that the custom, not very onerous it may be supposed, is not more widely honoured; libraries of this kind, especially if they contain relics of the time when substantial theological works were both produced and read, still have their value, in spite of the vastly augmented facilities for borrowing books from public sources, and they are surely more than unnecessary luxuries for promoting that informed conviction which has been the great strength of Unitarianism through the centuries.

The story of the Nottingham Chapel is typical of the most venerable Unitarian tradition we have in England. It goes back to the rise of Presbyterianism in the locality during the Commonwealth period, and the causing expulsion from the Church of England of three clergymen under the notorious Act of Uniformity of 1662. Two Nonconformist congregations were formed—one in Castle Gate, which has remained Trinitarian, and the other in High Pavement, which in due course became Unitarian. Not until after the Toleration Act of 1689, however, did the position become more secure, and even when the first High Pavement Chapel was opened in 1691, under the usual "open trust" formula, provision was made for its disposal for charitable purposes should the tide again flow against freedom in religion.

Perhaps we tend to forget that legal recognition of Unitarianism in this country was not conceded until 1813, and security of property not really until the Dissenters' Chapels Act of 1844, so that in the eighteenth century there was no knowing for how long freedom of worship would be enjoyed. Actually, however, no retrogression occurred, and the High Pavement congregation acquired a remarkable record of progress, parallel with that of the city itself. The journalist William Howitt and the poet Byron were among those who sat in its pews, Doddridge and Coleridge among those who preached from its pulpit, and it was there that James Martineau, coming from Derby in 1882, heard the sermon which persuaded him that his vocation was to be a minister and not an engineer. It has made a very significant contribution to the general life of Nottingham, and has had some noteworthy ministers, such as Benjamin Carpenter and R. A. Armstrong. The present building must be surpassed by few in our group of churches for its simple beauty and inspiration, and even the most fleeting visitor can benefit from it, since it is open for private prayer every weekday except Monday—a fact which the recent critics of the "closed churches" will be pleased to note. If there is nothing unique about the background of High Pavement Chapel, it is still worth recalling as a sample of the sustained service rendered by the Unitarian community to so many cities. It is clear that only by loyalty to this great past can a worthy future be ensured, only by homage to its distinguished heritage can Unitarianism be equipped to surmount whatever trials may lie ahead.

THE UNITARIAN COLLEGE, MANCHESTER

Academic work had already been in progress for some days when the formal Opening Proceedings of the Unitarian College were held on Wednesday, October 18th, followed by the annual meeting of Subscribers. There was an excellent attendance of friends and past and present students when, in accordance with custom, the President, Officers and Teaching Staff of the College assembled on the rostrum of the Lecture Room.

In an address fully up to the high standard that he has set himself in recent years, Major J. H. Bounds, M.C., first gave a cordial welcome to the students. Including one external student, the College has this year 17 students preparing for the ministry, five of whom are Lay Pastors in charge of Churches, while the rest are full time students reading for degrees in Arts and Theology, or for one or both of the Certificates offered by the University Faculty of Theology.

Speaking of the current debate between an "Oxford Movement and a Manchester School", Major Bounds said that the pros and cons of amalgamation with Manchester College were still being weighed. There were those who thought it would be wise for Manchester College to return to the place where it once was; others thought that to leave Oxford would be a tremendous mistake. While Trojan and Greek did battle in shining armour, the layman, perhaps, should say little, but he believed that the note of practical intimacy with the problems of our industrial centres was more valuable than an academic accent.

In the meantime, the financial position of U.C.M. was critical; the yearly excess of expenditure over income was approaching £2,000. The College Appeal for £10,000 had so far produced £2,785—and upon the successful conclusion of the Appeal depended the future of the Unitarian Churches. He reminded the students that they were the chief propagandists for the Fund; by their fruits men would know the College and the work of the Unitarian ministry. They were going into front line trenches, where they were desperately needed; they were going to no easy task nor quick victory. Theirs would not be the security of an armchair job. It had been said that no job had a future in it; the future lay in the men who did the job. The apostles crusaded forth into a hostile, pagan world and *founded* churches. They, too, would have to found a new kind of church, in a world of unfaith, cynicism and materialism. But they had the same power that the Apostles had—the power of Christ. The people hungered not for man's logic but God's love, not for the electric torch of man-made ideologies but for the Light of the World. Democracy needed not doctrine, but intelligence; not authority, but reason; not cynicism, but faith in God and man. If they added to these the potent captaincy of Jesus Christ, they would be well equipped for the great task that lay before them.

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UNITED NATIONS SUNDAY

SIR,—Could you explain to me why in our churches so little or no notice at all is taken of national or international events?

For instance, to-day is United Nations Sunday and in most churches of all denominations some reference was made, and prayers at least were offered for its work, but, where I attended there was no mention of United Nations at all, and this happens very often in Unitarian churches.—Yours, *F. E. Jackson.*

The Rev. C. A. Piper has begun his new ministry at the Kendal Church. A fine representative meeting welcomed him, including the Deputy Mayor.

On Oct. 7th the Eastern Union held its Annual Meeting at Friars Street, Ipswich, 86 being present. This was the occasion of the induction of the Rev. W. Haworth to the joint pastorate of Ipswich with Bury St. Edmunds. The charge to the Minister was delivered by the Rev. H. Stewart Carter and that to the Congregation by the Rev. J. A. Kennedy.

THE REV. FELIX HOLT

FELIX HOLT died on October 17, aged 69. He was the son of the Rev. Peter Holt, of Astley. He was educated at Manchester University (B.A. 1900) at the Unitarian College, Manchester, and at Manchester College, Oxford. He was Assistant Minister at Bolton, Bank Street, and was Minister at Ballynaney from 1913 to his death. He took an active part in the life of the denomination and of the town in which he lived, and won great respect for his kindness, his independence of mind and his scholarship. He was particularly interested in the study of languages and contributed to many periodicals, usually to correct some mistake found in them. He was Moderator of the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster, 1916-17 and 1935-36, and was Editor of the *Non-Subscribing Presbyterian*, 1943-48. In the year in which he died he was elected President of the Past and Present Students' Union of the Unitarian College, Manchester. He was a Tutor of the Workers' Educational Association, President of the local branch and a member of its District Council, and was Secretary of the Ballynaney Reading Room and Public Library. He also held many offices in the Masonic Order.

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DEATH

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